

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 581

By Dickerson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Bill Wade of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Bill Wade, one of the greatest athletes in Nashville and Vanderbilt history, a National Football League (NFL) champion, and a true gentleman who carried himself with dignity and humility; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wade was a star athlete in high school, college, and professional football, but he never acted like one, and his humility and graciousness earned him the respect and friendship of his contemporaries; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wade attended and played high school football at Montgomery Bell Academy (MBA) in Nashville before signing with his hometown's Vanderbilt University to play football at the collegiate level; and

WHEREAS, with this decision, he was following a family tradition and in the big footsteps of his father, W.J. Wade, who was captain of Vanderbilt's 1921 undefeated football team; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wade certainly lived up to his father's legacy, as he finished his career as one of the Commodores' best athletes in any sport, and he was among twelve members of Vanderbilt's inaugural Hall of Fame class in 2008; and

WHEREAS, while playing quarterback for Vanderbilt, Bill Wade was the 1951 SEC Player of the Year and a two-time All-American, and his 3,396 career passing yards stood as a Vanderbilt record more than thirty years after his graduation; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wade was selected first overall by the Los Angeles Rams in the 1952 NFL draft, but he proudly served his country in the military for two years before beginning his professional football career; and

WHEREAS, he played seven seasons for the Rams, but he signed with the Chicago Bears for the 1961 season and began his meteoric rise to the pinnacle of the NFL; and

WHEREAS, he started at quarterback from 1961-1964 for the Bears and earned All-Pro honors in 1962 and 1963; he expertly directed a conservative offense that perfectly complemented the tenacious Bears' defense that was best in the NFL in 1963, allowing only 144 points; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wade led the Bears to the 1963 NFL Championship, scoring both Chicago touchdowns on quarterback sneaks in a 14-10 victory over the Giants at Wrigley Field on an unbearably cold day with a wind chill factor of -11 degrees; this gutsy victory proved to be the Bears' final title with George "Papa Bear" Halas as coach; and

WHEREAS, a great leader and favorite of Papa Bear, Bill Wade is prominent in Chicago's record books despite playing only six seasons for the Bears, with 49 starts; he ranks sixth in career passing yards with 9,958 and third in touchdown passes with 68; and

WHEREAS, because he was so popular in Nashville during his playing days, Bears games were shown locally on tape delay on Sundays after the evening news; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wade remained close to his Chicago teammates from that era, one of whom described him as "a very serious person...[with whom] religion and family was first and foremost"; a Bears executive fondly remembered his "positive disposition and ...gratitude for everything he had"; and

WHEREAS, in the NFL, Wade played 128 games for the Rams and Bears and passed for 18,530 yards and 124 touchdowns; he also rushed for 24 touchdowns, including the two quarterback sneaks that propelled Chicago to the 1963 NFL Championship; and

WHEREAS, after his playing days were over, Bill Wade returned home to work in the banking industry; he was active in the civic life of Nashville for many years and remained a kind and gracious gentleman throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly remember the bountiful life of this exceptional athlete, public servant, and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Bill Wade, reflecting fondly upon his many accomplishments as a quarterback at MBA and Vanderbilt and in the NFL and his even more

impressive legacy as a gentleman of the old school who valued family, God, and community above all.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Wade.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.